

STOREFRONT

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

97 KENMARE STREET, NEW YORK, NY, 10012, U.S.A. TEL: 212.431.5795 FAX: 212.431.5755

Email: storefront@worldnet.att.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

R U S S

Residual Urban Site Strategies

December 9 - January 17, 1998

Opening Reception : Dec. 9, 6-8 PM

RUSS, Residual Urban Site Strategies, by Gordon Kipping, examines the proliferation of visual stimuli which characterizes the built environment, and how the cultural imagery has become central to the production of contemporary architecture.

The goal of RUSS is to develop a new strategy in converting very narrow residual sites into habitable spaces in Manhattan's Lower East Side. This area, with its distinctive tenement landscape complicated by oddly shaped city blocks, is particularly conducive to this speculative redevelopment, as it offers an extensive inventory of narrow sites.

Kipping relies on visual perception rather than physical reality to revise the measure of space. The relation between the cone of projection of the eye and the resolution of the image contained on a surface is the new architectural measurement. This in turn provokes the reconsideration of a massive inventory of narrow sites relegated to residue as potentially habitable.

Constructed along the north wall of the StoreFront space will be a 72 panel grid, containing maps, text and three dimensional computer site renderings of 42 represented reconstructed sites. Each of these proposed constructions will have a second computer generated rendering of its interior perspective.

Gordon Kipping graduated from SCI ARC, Southern California Institute of Architecture with a Masters of Architecture in January 1995 and received a Bachelors of Applied Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1989. Licensed as a professional engineer in Ontario, Canada, Gordon Kipping has worked in various engineering and architectural firms both domestically and internationally, including Philip Johnson and Greg Lynn. He is currently at Pei, Cobb, Freed and Partners. His book, Ordinary Diagrams, has been reprinted by Public Access Press of Southern California Institute of Architecture and is available at StoreFront.

For further information please contact Paola Morrongiello at 212 431 5795.



Southern California Institute of Architecture

R U S S

an acronym for Residual Urban Site Strategies, relates the susceptibility to visual stimuli which characterises our contemporary condition to a position within architectural production.

This relationship is developed with respect to strategies in the conversion of very narrow residual sites into habitable spaces in Manhattan's Lower East Side. This district is particularly conducive to such a proposal as its distinctive urban fabric produced by a tenement landscape and complicated with oddly formed city blocks offers an extensive inventory of narrow sites.

As a means of qualifying this narrow space as habitable, an architecture of surface is developed. This architecture appropriates image while retaining its principle attributes - a potential seductiveness and a potential to communicate information. Employing this potential, space becomes an effect of image and the two-dimensional surface becomes its external boundary. This forces a redefinition of space as that which occupies the volume between the body and the surface.

This gives rise to a revision in the measure of space. The cone of projection of the eye, the resolution of the image contained within the surface, and the proximity between the two are the variables in this measurement.

Through the control of these variables, our notion of habitable space adjusts to become an effect of the surfaces in visual proximity to that space. This in turn provokes the reconsideration of a massive inventory of narrow sites relegated to residue as potential receptors of the proposed building prototype.

S U R F A C E

Our contemporary condition can be characterised by an increasing responsiveness to surface phenomenon. From our susceptibility to the seduction of advertising imagery to our attentiveness to the dynamic barrage of moving images on the surface of the cathode ray tube, contemporary sensibility is cultured through a persistent feeding of image. What this delineates is a visual culture, both saturated with, and dependent on image and hence the container of image for stimulus. Surface is this container of image.

In *ORDINARY DIAGRAMS* (1995), surface as a mediator to proliferating electronic information technologies was a dominant theme. This project outlined how electronic information networks become legible only at their interface - the LED, the LCD, the cathode ray tube - the surface serving as the boundary between the electronic network and our perception. It described the potential of electronic image, with its dynamic capabilities, seductive qualities, and increased capacity to contain and communicate information, as a component of a architecture.

This was set in contrast to form as an architectural strategy. Form, it was said, typically results in a style and then a fashion and ultimately subjugates itself to cooption altering any of its intended physiognomic characteristics. Electronic image, when placed in juxtaposition to form, subordinates it and in turn, contains it. It was optimistically concluded that in the context of our image mediated culture there arises a potential for a responsive mode of architectural conceptualisation employing dynamic surface.

Architecture, surface oriented or other, is typically devoid of a perceptible dynamic quality, particularly in comparison to the dynamic surface proposed in *ORDINARY DIAGRAMS*. It could be said that conventional architecture is slow. An architecture of surface, however slow, nonetheless can contain image and its properties - a potential seductiveness and a potential to communicate information. Employing this potential, space becomes an effect of surface and the information contained within the surface.

S P A C E

Our contemporary condition, characterised by an increased responsiveness to surface phenomenon, has brought about the conceptualisation of an architecture of surface. If we accept that the mandate of architecture is the mastery of space, the necessity to demarcate space within a surface architecture arises.

Space, by numerous accounts, has collapsed. The present context of globalisation aided by the proliferation of electronic information technologies has created a perception of diminishing space. Space everywhere can be instant fed into electronic networks and simultaneously made available here. Our proximity to everywhere becomes our proximity to those networks, or better, to the interface serving as a boundary to those networks - the surface.

The two-dimensional surface, in turn, becomes our external boundary of space. This forces a redefinition of space as that which occupies the volume between the body and the surface. More specifically, it is the cone of projection between our eye and the total projection.

This gives rise to a revision in the measure of space. The cone of projection of the human eye, the resolution of the information contained within the surface, and the proximity between the two for comfortable viewing are the new variables in this measurement.

R E S I D U E

An aerial photograph of Manhattan reveals the distinctive fabric that characterises the Lower East Side. This district, bounded by 14th Street on the north, the East River on the east, the Brooklyn Bridge on the south, and Third Avenue and the Bowery on the west, is predominantly made up of a single building typology - the tenement.

Technically any renter occupied multiple unit dwelling with communal circulation, yards, or bathrooms, the tenement has come to signify a five to six storey, single apartment building. As a housing type, it has evolved over the course of Manhattan's urban history and has been preserved in its various forms in the Lower East Side.

The New York Commissioners Plan, adopted in 1811, can be sited as the blueprint for Manhattan. The Plan allowed for the formation of rectangular blocks which could receive a regular geometry of lots conforming as closely as possible to an ideal unit of 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep. At the south end of Manhattan, the geometry sprang perpendicularly from the shoreline of the East River and rotated to adapt to existing settlements that it traversed. Towards the north end of the district and extending over the rest of Manhattan, the gridiron plan created 200 foot by 800 foot blocks. Within these blocks, the 25 foot by 100 foot lots were established. Out of an economic imperative to maximize densities within this dimension, the tenement as a housing type emerged as the dominant form.

The predecessor to the tenement housing type was the 25 foot wide by 50 foot deep single family row house. With the tendency toward densification spurred on by the exodus of the affluent class and the influx of immigrant communities, the single family row house evolved through successive alterations into a typical tenement house. Through interior conversions to multiple family dwellings, back-building and rear extensions, the tenement rose five or six stories and approached 100 percent lot coverage.

Successive legislation limited these densities in an effort to address health concerns and to maintain social control. Nonetheless, this landscape continued to be reproduced. The last major civic urban study, The Plan For New York City of 1969, authored by the New York City Planning Commission, mapped land use and densities of the city and upheld the current pattern of predominately high-medium density residential land use for the district, a directive reaffirmed by the current Zoning Resolution of the City of New York.

With the emergence of infrastructural necessities and evolving economic imperatives, aberrations to the ideal block plan resulted. Large social housing projects, hospitals, schools, civic buildings, institutional and commercial buildings, bridge construction, and street widening were superimposed on the existing grid necessitating adjustment to the block plan and the subsequent creation of lots which did not conform to the 25 foot by 100 foot standard.

The mandate to maximize economic advantage through the reproduction of the standardized typology of the tenement, viewed as the smallest economical unit, describes the present climate and hesitance toward design innovation. The cracks unfit for the predominant typology are left vacant and can be labeled residue. The various classes of residue are here identified.

P R O T O T Y P E

The proposed prototypical building is inserted into the identified residual sites on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The architecture of the prototype is adaptable to the dimensional constraints of the varying forms of residue. A common constraint is the narrow widths of the sites. The interior space compensates for this constraint by acting as the receptor of an architecture of surface, characterised by its ability through panelisation to contain still and dynamic image. The cone of projection of the eye, the resolution of the image contained within the surface, and the proximity between the two become architectural design considerations in this image saturated building type.

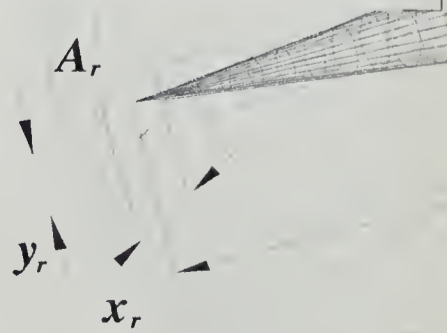
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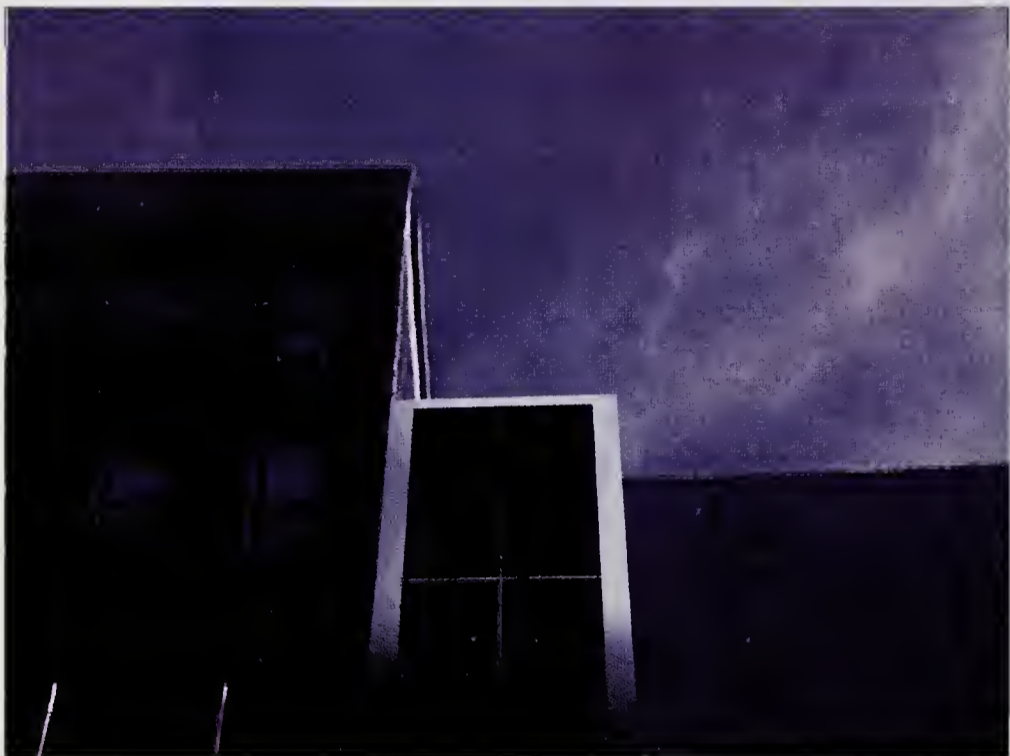
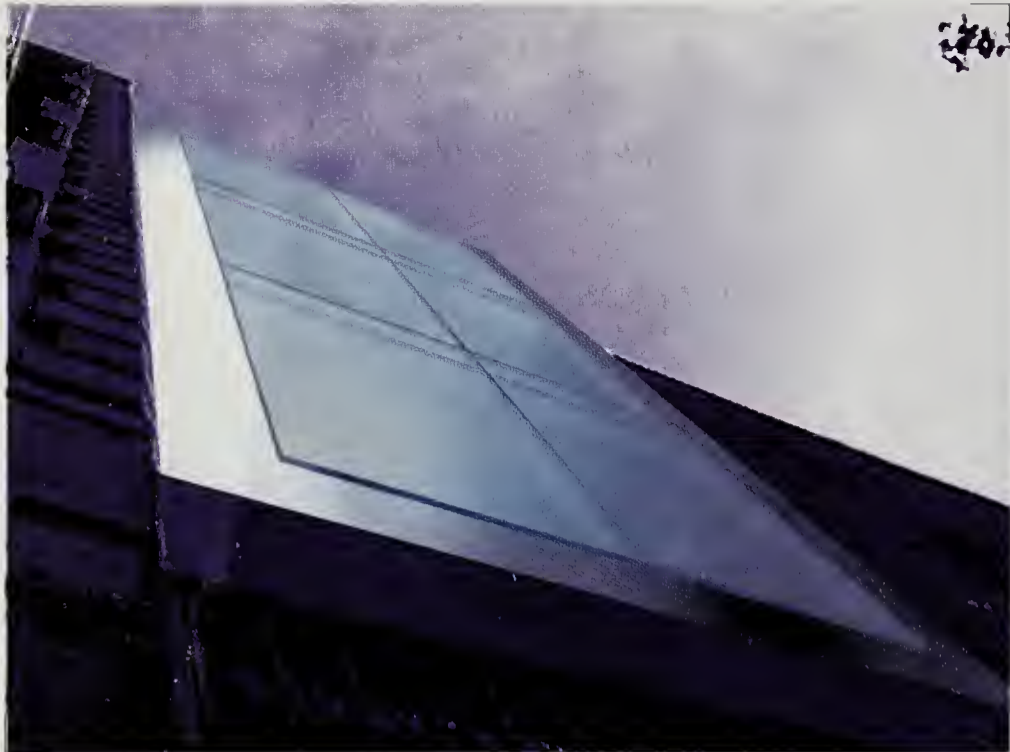
GORDON KIPPING, 6 TEXTS

09 DECEMBER 1997 TO 17 JANUARY 1997 exhibition dates
09 DECEMBER 1997, 6PM TO 8PM opening reception
TUESDAY TO SATURDAY, 11AM TO 6PM gallery hours

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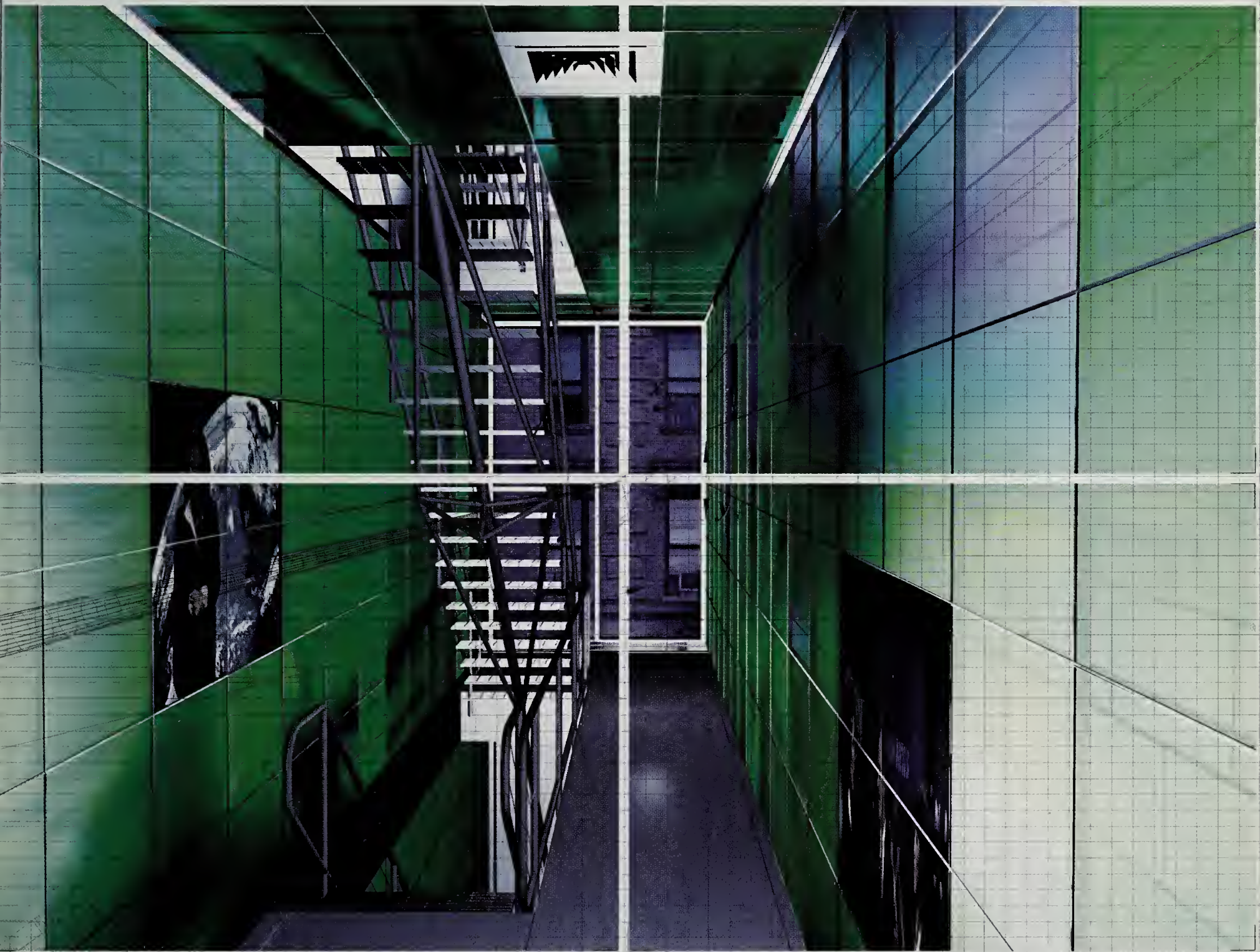


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RESIDUAL URBAN SITE STRATEGIES

GORDON KIPPING, G TECTS


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